

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRAHAM of South Carolina. I thank the Chair.

With that, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I do not know—I haven't seen the list of cosponsors—but if they are not listed, I ask unanimous consent that Senators LEAHY, REID, and CLINTON be added as cosponsors.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, we have worked on this amendment. There is a vast problem out there among Guard and Reserve people. We have a total force now in our military. We passed the concept that the Guard and Reserves are replacements for the regular services when they are sent overseas. The Guard and Reserves are sent overseas almost as much as the regular members of our military. They have volunteered to defend us, as the Senators have said. Their families need the same protection that we offer to those who volunteer in the regular services.

We have modified this amendment because we really basically want to see what happens when this change takes place. The cost of this amendment that we have put forward is approximately \$400 million this year and by the following year it will be \$500 million. We don't know how much it will really cost because we don't know how many will come forward and take this, as compared to what they are doing now as far as their medical is concerned. It is a contributory system for TRICARE, another experiment that we hope we will be able to get some track record on.

As I have become more familiar with the National Guard, it is very strong, and the Reserves, also. We want to assure that people will continue to maintain an interest in joining the Guard and Reserves. Most people don't understand that the transition from Guard and Reserves to regular services has reversed history. In days gone by, people came out of the military and entered the Guard and Reserves. Today many people enter the Guard and Reserves and then decide they are going to try to become career military. This will be an added inducement to get more people to enlist in the Guard and Reserves. It might have a reverse effect and we are not sure of that yet. This will give us a track record.

I am pleased to say that we have conferred with members of the Armed Services Committee on this amendment, and they have agreed we should go forward with it.

I am pleased to accept the amendment on behalf of the Senate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there further debate on the amendment?

The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM of South Carolina. I want to add one thing. There was an article in USA Today yesterday: "Army Reserve Fears Troop Exodus." The Army National Guard is 15,000 below its recruiting goal. "Soldiers are 'stressed' on yearlong deployments." I really honestly believe that this benefit made available will help retention and recruitment because the problems with these deployments are coming down the road. The further we can get ahead of this by beefing up the benefit package, the better America will be.

I ask unanimous consent to print the article to which I referred in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

ARMY RESERVE FEARS TROOP EXODUS

(By Dave Moniz)

If the United States is unable to recruit significantly more international troops or quell the violence in Iraq in the next few months, it could trigger an exodus of active and reserve forces, the head of the U.S. Army Reserve said Monday.

Lt. Gen. James Helmly, chief of the 205,000-member Army Reserve, said he and other Pentagon leaders will be monitoring retention rates closely next year, when problems could begin to become apparent for full-time and part-time soldiers coming off long tours of duty in Iraq.

"Retention is what I am most worried about. It is my No. 1 concern," Helmly told USA TODAY's editorial board. "This is the first extended-duration war the country has fought with an all-volunteer force."

Helmly described the war on terrorism as an unprecedented test of the 30-year-old all-volunteer military. Historically, he said, the National Guard and Reserve were designed to mobilize for big wars and then bring soldiers home quickly.

Today, he said, they have "entered a brave new world" where large numbers of troops will have to be deployed for long periods.

Counting training time and yearlong tours in Iraq, some Army Reserve soldiers could be mobilized for 15 months or more. Helmly described the situation facing soldiers in Iraq as "stressed" but said he could not characterize it as at a "breaking point."

The stresses facing the nation's reservists were demonstrated again this week when the National Guard announced it had alerted a combat brigade from Washington state that it could be sent to Iraq next year if a third block of international troops cannot be recruited to join the British and Polish-led divisions now in Iraq.

Guard officials said Monday that the 5,000-member 81st Army National Guard brigade from Washington state has been notified that it could be called to active duty.

Helmly said a huge factor in Iraq will be the Pentagon's ability to train an Iraqi army and security force.

The Defense Department recently announced plans to accelerate the development of an Iraqi army, pushing the goal from 12,000 troops to 40,000 troops in the next year.

The Army National Guard and Army Reserve have about one-fourth of their troops—nearly 129,000 soldiers—on active duty.

The active-duty Army and the Army Reserve both met their recruiting goals for the fiscal year that ends today. The Army National Guard, however, is expected to fall about 15% short of its recruiting goal of 62,000 soldiers.

Although the Guard and Reserve say their retention rates have not suffered this year, the figures could be misleading. Under an order known as "stop loss," soldiers on active duty are prohibited from leaving the service until their tours end.

Active-duty and Reserve commanders fear that when U.S. soldiers on yearlong rotations come home next year, many will choose to leave the service.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there further debate on the amendment?

If not, the question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 1816) was agreed to.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. STEVENS. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 1821

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Alaska [Mr. STEVENS] proposes an amendment numbered 1821.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To strike the requirement for the Department of Defense to describe an Analysis of Alternatives for replacing the capabilities of the KC-135 aircraft fleet)

Strike section 309.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, this is an amendment to delete a provision in the bill that required a report from the Department of the Interior. At the request of Senator MCCAIN, I am removing that, and I ask unanimous consent to remove that from the bill before it goes to conference. I ask for its consideration.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there further debate on the amendment?

If not, the question is on agreeing to amendment No. 1821.

The amendment (No. 1821) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 1822

Mr. REID. Mr. President, if my friend, the Senator from Rhode Island, will be patient, I send an amendment to the desk on behalf of Senator MURRAY.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID], for Mrs. MURRAY, for herself and Mr. DURBIN, proposes an amendment numbered 1822.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.